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PRIME MINISTER KICKS OFF THREE-NATION EUROPE TOUR

Narendra Modi left for Berlin on Sunday—the first stop in a three-nation tour that will also take him to Denmark and France

CONSULTATIONS, SUMMITS LINED UP

Modi will hold talks with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in Berlin on Monday and the two will co-chair the 6th India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations. Modi will travel to Copenhagen on Tuesday to participate in the second India-Nordic Summit with Danish leader Mette Frederiksen. On Wednesday, he will meet French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris

TO PRESENT INDIA'S VIEW ON UKRAINE

- India hopes to boost partnerships in trade and investment, clean energy, defence, and technology during the prime minister's trip
- Talks will also focus on the situation in Ukraine. Ahead of PM's departure, the newly-appointed Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra called for a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine

Fin Min

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN WILL ACCOMPANY MODI TO GERMANY

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Year-on-year rise in states' revenue

April GST mop-up at all-time high of ₹1.68L cr

Gross collection ₹25,000 crore more than the next highest of ₹1,42,095 crore which was registered in March

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE GST revenue continued to break new records with the monthly mop-up breaching the ₹1.5 lakh crore mark for the first time ever in April.

At ₹1,67,540 crore, April's collection was 20% more than the figure in the same month last year. The previous highest collection was recorded in March last, when the government received ₹1,42,095 crore.

The government attributed this growth in collection to improvement in compliance. The finance ministry in its statement on Sunday said the administration has taken various measures to nudge taxpayers to file returns on time, make compliances easier and take strict action against evaders identified based on data analytics and artificial intelligence.

As many as 1.06 crore GST returns were filed in GSTR-3B during the month. Of them, 97 lakh returns were for transactions in March (as compared to total 92 lakh in the same month a year ago). Return filing percentage in April was at 84.7% compared to 78.3% a year ago.

GSTR-3B is a summary of monthly returns filed by each business giving details of monthly sales, input tax credits and total tax liability.

Most big states reported healthy growth in GST collection with Odisha registering 28% growth, Maharashtra 25%, Haryana 23%, Andhra Pradesh 22%, Karnataka 19% and Gujarat 17% (see map). Bihar was the only big state wih a year-on-year decline in April.

"The impact of the continuing focus on ensuring timely compliance by all GST registrants by restricting the input tax credits of the buyers together with enhanced analytics to detect evasion has also contributed significantly to the all-time high collections," said M S Mani, partner, Deloitte India.

The total April revenue for the Centre was ₹66,582 crore while states get ₹68,755 crore.

Import revenue

Revenues from imports were 30% higher and those from domestic transactions were 17% more as compared to collections from the same sources during the same month last year

Karnataka's GST collection at ₹11,820 cr, up 19% from last yr

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

KARNATAKA'S GST collection for April was Rs 11,820 crore, an increase of 19 per cent from the year-ago collection of Rs 9,965 crore and over 29 per cent from March accruals of Rs 8,750 crore, said Commercial Tax Commissioner C Shikha.

Since commercial activities resumed after restrictions were relaxed, the economy has seen a turnaround and the state has reported substantially higher GST collections. For February it was Rs 9,176 crore.

Karnataka stood second only to Maharashtra in the highest GST collection.

Officers said, "Better collections are because of the improvement in compliance behaviour, which has been a result of various steps taken by the tax administration. Enforcement was strict with errant taxpayers identified based on data analytics and artificial intelligence."

FKCCI GST Committee Chairman C Manohar said, "Business and service sectors are doing well as people are emerging from difficult times of the pandemic. The taxpayers' compliance and administration efforts in curtailing tax evasion through strict enforcement and initiation of e-invoice seem to be the encouraging factors."

TRAGIC FATE

Acid attack victim's kin gets ready for sister's wedding in grief

SHILPA P @ Bengaluru

"HER sister's wedding is just a week away, on May 7 and 8. We are forced to prepare for it in deep grief without Aasha (name changed), who had done all the preparations and was all excited about it," cried Sundresh, the uncle of acid attack victim Aasha.

"Being a vegetable vendor, her father had done his best to get a good education for his two daughters and a son. Aasha's elder sister is a software engineer, while Aasha too had done her BE and MBA and was working at a finance company. She wrote the SBI banking exam recently," her uncle said.

"The accused, Nagesh, had rented the house of Aasha's grandmother opposite Aasha's house. He was staying with his elder brother and parents. A few years ago, when Aasha was still studying, he had approached her mother and had expressed his interest in marrying Aasha. "But her mother had declined the proposal, saying Aasha was still studying and they wouldn't get her married so early. She had told Nagesh's elder brother, who had advised the accused not to force Aasha when her family was not interested. They later vacated that house and rented out another house nearby. Nagesh had approached Aasha at her office 25 days ago and proposed to her. Aasha told him that she did not know him and was not interested in marrying him," Sundresh said.

"On Wednesday, Aasha's father was going near her office near Sunkadakatte Circle to get a gas cylinder. Aasha too left home early so that she could get dropped by her father," he said. CONTINUED ON: P3

BSF morale low, no cadre review for Group B and C

MAYANK SINGH @ New Delhi

THE Border Security Force (BSF) personnel who guard the nation's frontiers, appear to be losing motivation because of the lack of avenues for growth within their service. Take the periodic cadre review.

Its stated objective is to make projections of requirements of personnel and to rationalise the cadre structure so as to improve efficiency and morale. Yet, cadre review of BSF's Group B and C has not been done since the force came into existence in 1965. Seven years ago, the first proposal for their cadre review was sent to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for approval. There has been no forward movement yet.

"A cadre review proposal for personnel below officer rank (Group B & C) was ordered on May 15, 2015 by the Director General of BSF. The proposal was sent to the MHA on Nov 3, 2015," a senior officer said.

While Group B includes inspectors and sub inspectors, Group C has constables and head constables. Group A comprises officers — assistant commandant and above. *TNIE* spoke to multiple personnel of the BSF to understand the situation.

For Group A, the Delhi High Court in 2016 ordered a cadre review, pointing to the younger age profile of commanders in the Army where an officer becomes a commanding officer with around 16 years of service. It directed the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) to likewise bring down the age profiles of their commanders. The average ageprofile of a BSF commandant, the commanding officer of a unit, is 52 years at present, informed the officer quoted above.

The BSF has a strength of around 2,55,000 — around 2.5 lakh below officer rank and around 5,000 officers.

Ranks and promotions are a very important part of the morale and motivation mechanism for every combatised force. Yet, a candidate joining BSF at the bottom of the pyramid can consider himself lucky if he becomes a head constable after 21 long years of service. For, not all constables of the 2000 batch have picked up head constable ranks.

At present, a constable takes more than 32 years to become an assistant sub inspector and 36 years for promotion as sub inspector. Very few reach the inspector rank. "Reaching the rank on an assistant commandant is a rarity," said sources.

CONTINUED ON: P7

BSF low on candidate preference: Study

"An internal analysis of the forms filled by candidates joining the force shows that BSF is among the last in choice, for both officers and personnel," a senior BSF officer informed

RAINING RELIEF

After enduring days of extreme heat, Bengaluru receives torrential rain bringing respite to citizens on Sunday | SHRIRAM BN

Junior doctors want NEET-PG put off

KAVITA BAJELI-DATT @ New Delhi

THOUSANDS of junior doctors are urging the Centre to postpone this year's NEET-PG exam, scheduled to be held on May 21, by two months as the counselling process for the 2021 exam is still going on.

In an online poll conducted by the Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), more than 85 per cent of NEET-PG aspirants voted to postpone the exam.

"There needs to be a sufficient gap between the counselling of one session and the subsequent exam," Dr Chinmayee Gowda, in charge of the women's wing of the FAIMA, explained. "But, the NEET-PG counselling of 2021 will get over by May 3, and then, the state counselling will start, which will probably end by late May. We will be busy with the counselling process. How can we prepare for the exam?" she told this newspaper.

Adding to the students' woes, they have to be physically present for the state counselling, which means they must travel to different states. "We're in a dilemma whether to study for the exam or attend the counselling," Dr Benhur Basheer, a NEET-PG aspirant said.

"Postponement of NEET-PG from March to May was done hoping that counselling of 2021 will be over by April. It is unfortunate that the process is still on," FAIMA president Dr Rohan Krishnan said. Junior doctors have threatened to surrender their MBBS degrees if NEET-PG 2022 is not postponed.

Mysuru to get ₹23,000 crore chip fab plant

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

AMID intense competition among various states to attract semiconductor fabrication units, the Karnataka government on Sunday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Israel-based ISMC Analog Fab Pvt Ltd for setting up such a plant in the state with an investment of Rs 22,900 crore ($3 billion).

The company will implement the project fully over the next seven years and the facility is expected to generate employment opportunities for 1,500 people. The MoU was signed by Additional Chief Secretary, IT/BT Department, Dr EV Ramana Reddy, and ISMC Director Ajay Jalan in the presence of Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

"This MoU is significant and Karnataka understands that it's not just fiscal incentives that matter, but also the availability of a conducive ecosystem and overall ease in operations," Bommai said.

"The MoU with ISMC would make the state a place to look forward to in semiconductor technology. It will help turn challenges in the sector into opportunities and provide a forum for technology and cultural exchange between Israel and India," he added. P4

EXPRESS READ

Pandit Rajshekhar Mansur passes away

Dharwad: Noted singer from Dharwad Pandit Rajshekhar Mansur passed away at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Sunday. He was 80. He is the son of legendary singer Pandit Mallikarjun Mansur. Mansur was conferred with several awards including the Rajyotsava Award of Karnataka Government. He is known for his experiments with ragas which he used in his teachings.

Solar push to trains gains momentum

Ranchi: Dhanbad Railway Division is gearing up to become the first in the country to ply trains on solar power. Railway officials said they have chalked out a plan under which certain potion of the total power load will be shared by solar energy. The initiative will be taken up in the 200-km stretch between Pradhan Khunta and Bandhua stations on the Grand Chord line | PB

KGF, ONCE A 'LITTLE ENGLAND', LACKS EVEN BASIC FACILITIES

The dilapidated house of a labourer who used to work with the BGML | SHRIRAM BN

ASHWINI M SRIPAD AND V VELAYUDHAM @ KGF, Kolar

DURING the time of the British, Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) had everything that a developed town could dream of. Other than the best basic amenities, it had sprawling bungalows, sports clubs, clubhouses, gymkhanas and best educational institutions. Known as "Little England", KGF is just a mere shadow of its original self now.

KGF, which is some 30 km from the district headquarters Kolar, has no proper public bus connectivity. There is a small railway station nearby, but no last-mile connectivity.

Albert, who used to work as a timber man at Bharat Gold Mines Ltd and continues to live at KGF, says they do not have government buses running to the town. "We have to take autorickshaws to the nearest bus stand at Robertsonpet, 8 km away. We spend Rs 60 on autos.

GROUND ZERO KGF PART 2

It would have cost us less if buses were coming to the town." The frequency of trains to Bengaluru is good. "But we cannot depend on trains all the time," he said.

Not just connectivity, water facilities too are poor. Houses here get piped water, but it is hard and not suitable for drinking or cooking. Drinking water is supplied by private tankers, which charge them Rs 10 for three pots. "We have to spend at least Rs 20-30 a day on drinking water. This works out to Rs 600-700 per day, which is a big amount for us," he explained. If they miss the supplies from the tanker, they have to go all the way to Banagiri village, which is 8 km away, for water. The reverse osmosis (RO) plant in the town has not been working for a few months now. P5